



FIGHTING for PENNSYLVANIA FAMILIES

The Creating Early Childhood Leaders Act

U.S. Senator Bob Casey and U.S. Senator Mitt Romney

Many states have expanded publicly funded pre-kindergarten programs, making elementary school principals, superintendents, and other school leaders increasingly responsible for overseeing early education classrooms. As districts continue to establish pre-K programs, it is critical that we not only expand access to early learning, but that we expand access to high-quality early learning. That means school districts and leaders should have adequate training to support early educators and early learners. In a 2017 [study](#) on principal preparation, only nine states reported that their principal licensing programs explicitly provided coursework in early childhood education. Yet, every year, thousands of children attend early childhood programs overseen by an elementary school principal. Given the significant impact principals and other school leaders have on the academic achievement of students under their care, ensuring principals and school leaders have early education training is imperative to the development of young children.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and researchers have found that critical brain development occurs in a child's first years. In fact, a child's brain reaches almost its full adult size before the age of six. As such, early emotional, social and physical development can significantly affect a child's long-term academic achievement and overall well-being. Given the importance of these formative years, it is critical that all elementary educators understand the unique process of development that occurs in during early childhood. Ultimately, when children learn earlier in life, they learn more later.

The Creating Early Childhood Leaders Act would revise requirements for effective school leadership programs that receive funding from Teacher Quality Partnership grants, a federal program designed to enhance teacher professional development. Specifically, the bill would amend Title II of the Higher Education Act by requiring school leadership programs receiving federal Teacher Quality Partnership grants to include training on early childhood development and effective instructional leadership for children from birth through age eight.

This change would help ensure that principals and school leaders are able to effectively (a) support pre-kindergarten teachers in developing appropriate instruction and (b) assist pre-kindergarten students through the transition between from pre-K through second grade. Ultimately, if the full potential of early education is to be met, elementary school leaders must be prepared to lead young learners and early educators.

Supporting Organizations

The Education Trust, National Association of Elementary School Principals, Bipartisan Policy Center, First Five Years Fund, ZERO TO THREE, National Association for the Education of Young Children, and New America.